

# Technical Assistance Bulletin

## Localizing National Campaigns

Many public and private initiatives have successfully developed effective and creative nationally based campaigns to educate the public, to promote behavior change, and to create support for policy issues. National campaign organizers most often find that in order to sustain a campaign, and to achieve maximum impact, it is necessary for that national campaign to take root at the local level. Yet implementing and sustaining a national campaign at the local level requires thoughtful design and tailoring.

This bulletin provides insights into that design and tailoring process. It establishes a common understanding by defining the terms "campaign" and "localizing," looking at why localizing is important, and then offering considerations and tactics for utilizing a national campaign at the local level. Throughout the bulletin examples and lessons from various campaigns are used as illustrations.

### What is a campaign?

A number of definitions exist for "campaign." Some definitions focus on purpose—the campaign's goal, while other definitions focus on process—the manner in which the campaign is implemented. Because we share a common goal, to prevent and reduce alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug problems, we

provide the following process-focused definition offered by Rogers, et al.: "A communication campaign is a preplanned set of communication activities designed to reach and motivate people using a particular type of message. Campaigns are conducted for a short period (usually from one week to three months) with specific attitudinal and behavioral objectives. [They] almost always use a multimedia approach." In addition, Schramm, as cited by Rogers suggests, "... we must use a combination of communication channels, employing each in such a way and at such a time as to contribute most the total usefulness of the information."

### Elements of Effective Campaigns:

- Reasonable communication objectives
- Clear understanding of the audience
- Theoretical/science base
- Relevant, credible, and consistent messages
- Sustained over time
- Well-planned process
- Multiple options for message delivery

Most campaigns use a variety of media options such as radio, television, newspapers, magazines, the Internet, and CD-ROMs. The reason for this variety is the assumption that each medium can reach a unique part of the audience. Additionally, multiple exposure to the message is important to changing attitudes and behavior. Most campaigns also use community action and interpersonal components to support or enhance the media message.

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## Why localize?

National campaigns that have effectively undergone tailoring processes have provided communities with information on the issues, a consistent and basic message, and basic materials and tools to localize and deliver core campaign messages.

Local campaigns have saved time and money by adapting national campaign materials. Links with the national campaign have also helped local campaigns establish themselves quickly and achieve high visibility in their communities.

However, national campaigns may also represent severe limitations. For example they may provide information that is too general or that has little relevance to local communities. Their messages may be too generic or too stereotypical to resonate with culturally or geographically diverse audiences. Or they may have selected spokespersons with varying degrees of credibility.

National campaigns are generally more effective at providing information and raising awareness, and less effective at skills training, behavioral reinforcement, and environmental interventions. Building a network of State and local partners strengthens and sustains the national campaigns. They are enriched by the creative strategies developed at the local level as community programs can tailor and adapt interventions to meet the unique needs of their target populations. This leads to a diverse array of strategies that bring local and national visibility to the campaign.

## What is localizing?

In general, localizing is using and adapting national campaign materials. When a campaign is localized, locality-specific information is added and elements are tailored or adapted to the locality. Sometimes it is a tagline, a logo, or other identifying information. At other times, more work is done with the message itself or the content to make them resonate at the local level. Sometimes images, or even the actual products are altered to reflect geopolitical units (such as towns, cities, counties), geocultural units (such as racial, ethnic, gender groups), and specific settings (such as schools, work places, health care sites). In other instances, strategy documents are created locally and tied to local facts, figures, and plans.

Localizing must also involve community ownership and buy-in. The community or locality must buy into the program and/or agree with the goals, issues, and messages of the campaign. When this happens, the community assumes continuing responsibility for the campaign, which ensures program continuity and longevity. For example, CSAP's By Our Own Hands campaign (see box) devoted considerable time up front to involve localities in the planning and design process.

### By Our Own Hands Campaign

*Funder:*

Center for Substance Abuse  
Prevention

*Target Audience:*

African American Youth

*Goal:*

To challenge the normative belief that African-American youth use more drugs than other youth and to reinforce the resiliency of African-American youth



Involving them early and being prepared to make significant changes based on their input helped campaign designers avoid imposing artificial agendas on the community. Consequently, the campaign has continued in communities long after the funding has stopped.

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## Getting started: considerations for the local campaign

To be effective at localizing, local designers must not settle for the first campaign that crosses their desk. Linking with the right campaign will require careful consideration of local goals and objectives, local feedback, local readiness, expectations, flexibility in the campaign design and materials, and resources for support.

### Local goals and objectives

A national campaign will serve you best when there is symmetry between its goals and yours. For best results, local programs should determine their own objectives and find complementary matches with national campaigns (see Case Example box). In addition, make sure you understand the campaign's goals and objectives. Are they realistic? Is it clear who the campaign is targeting? Do campaign materials and messages reflect an understanding of the audience?

### Local feedback

How a campaign is localized depends greatly on the knowledge, needs, experiences, practices, values, and composition of the locality. Carefully examine the campaign's desired behavior, the benefits associated with the behavior change, the price the audience will pay to give up their current behavior, the appeal used to promote the behavior, and the vehicle used to convey the message. Ensure that these things will work in your locality. And remember that no population is static. Factors related to acceptance of a new idea

## Case Example

Westbrook Health Services in rural Spencer, WV, was faced with the challenge of mobilizing community support and involvement in prevention in Calhoun, Roane, and Jackson counties—a rural area with a total population of about 50,000. They knew that there were few activities for youth in the area. To get a better sense of what was needed, they conducted a formal needs assessment with 3,500 local high school students studying statistics to tabulate results. Based on student responses to a section of the survey on “future community efforts,” they decided to use CSAP's Reality Check materials to support efforts because the materials were designed to mobilize prevention efforts in rural areas.

*The Prevention Pipeline*, Jan/Feb 1998

(innovation) or knowledge levels are constantly changing. Therefore, pretesting of existing and adapted campaign materials is advisable. In addition, as the campaign evolves, each new innovation should be checked with the community prior to implementation.

For example, Project LEAN (see box) allowed consumer research and feedback to guide the development of the messages and strategies for its campaign.

## Project Lean

### *Funder:*

Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation

### *Target Audience:*

All Americans

### *Goal:*

To reduce dietary fat consumption

The trends and findings of its focus groups showed that most consumers were increasingly aware of the link between dietary fat and chronic disease, but that changes in dietary practices had lagged behind awareness and concern. So the campaign developed messages that were both motivational and informational. And when the public called for more detailed information to facilitate modifications in their diets, the campaign supplemented its public service announcements by generating publicity more tailored to the particular information needs of the target audience.

### **Local readiness**

Getting involved with national campaign efforts is not a task for a single individual. There is much to be done, and it requires a lot of coordination with and buy-in from both national and local partners. Coordinating with media and other distribution channels, finding avenues to reach the target audience, and preparing to respond to the demand for services that a campaign can generate are big jobs.

As you embark upon a national campaign, make sure you have people who are in positions to work with you. Think about what roles are important to campaign implementation and who is available to fill those roles. Can you mobilize enough people (staff or volunteers) to conduct a series of planned efforts? Can you act quickly when there is breaking news or a tragedy? How much flexibility will you have?

### **Expectations**

Understand what the national campaign designers/planners want from you in exchange for the use of its materials. Some groups have "use agreements" that require the sharing of contact information and updates on how you have used the materials. Others want you to provide comments, concerns, and other reactions to the campaign and its materials for inclusion in evaluation. Still others require that you undertake a

more rigorous evaluation design and report results. All of these are legitimate requests and considered essential for campaign success, but they all could result in additional work and resources. So make sure you know what you are getting into so that you can plan for it.

### **Flexibility in design and materials**

Find out what is available, how it can be used, and what (if any) limits there are on use or adaptation. Often materials can be obtained by writing or calling the designer. More recently, materials can be downloaded from the World Wide Web through the Internet. Many national campaigns offer recommendations regarding proper use of their logos and materials, including guidelines for use of graphic elements such as color and size. Some believe that too much adaptation alters their ability to evaluate campaign effectiveness. So it will be important to discuss with national designers the amount of tailoring that is desired.

Even though adaptable materials are commonplace, remember that it can be expensive and challenging to accomplish extensive tailoring of the content format, and look of materials. Designers have experienced different outcomes that are difficult to explain but worthy of note. On one hand for example, when *Project LEAN* placed PSAs, organizers tried to get local visibility by including local contacts. However, this became very expensive and difficult. There were problems with timing - getting it out at the right time- and in making it meaningful to the local population. On the other hand for example, CSAP's By Our Own Hands campaign found the tailoring process easy. CSAP offered guidelines to avoid compromising the message and to allow local groups to adapt and shape the message based on how they defined the campaign message. These guidelines were based on earlier meetings with the target audience that had concluded that the message should avoid scare tactics and should not include stereotypes.



## Support resources

Whether the reason is political or otherwise, many organizations or local groups join forces with national campaigns because their organization alone is unable to operate such a campaign. Selecting national campaigns that provide necessary resources such as technical assistance, adaptable materials, and model activities is not always possible but can be very important.

For example, the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition (see box) provides updates on what is happening across the country and offers information on what is working to give guidance and direction. They also have a database, organized by state, county, and community, of resources and possible partners.

### National Inhalant Prevention Coalition

*Funder:*

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
and member donations and fees

*Target Audience:*

General youth

*Goal:*

To reduce inhalant use by youth

Similarly, the National Office of Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) web site includes a media gallery that makes television, radio, and print ads available for viewing on line.

And, look for a national designer that is able to support the core operations of your program. When possible, link with national efforts that offer grants in support of local implementation. This does not mean that they are buying your participation but rather that they have a vested interest in ensuring that research is done properly, data is interpreted locally, and other elements are implemented.

For example in CSAP's By Our Own Hands campaign, communities were supported with paid staff who had no other task but to ensure that the campaign worked locally. In addition, paid staff were supported through technical assistance from the national campaign office that included planning workshops, strategy development, and information sharing. Although few national efforts currently offer this resource, in the past it has proven to be key to successful local campaigns.

## Tactics used to localize campaigns

Remember the considerations just discussed and be sure to ask lots of questions of the national campaign designers before you embark upon an effort to localize. There is no secret formula or exact chronology of steps for localizing a campaign. But based on the lessons of others, tactics that have been tried and that seem to work include the following:

1. **Create a local definition for the campaign theme or message.** What will it mean? How will you support it? What part of the issue is germane to your locality? Reality Check is a national public education campaign, sponsored by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, to increase awareness of the problems marijuana causes, help youth ages 12 to 17 refuse marijuana or stop using it, and change pro-use norms. If you are working with this campaign, think about what your "reality" is and focus on it. Is it more important to alert your community to the harms of marijuana use or to alert people to the fact that youth are using at an earlier age or to focus on some other marijuana-related reality?
2. **Develop adaptations.** Sometimes the material is focused on the right age group or subject, but you may find it necessary to expand the discussion or include

different aspects of the issue. The material may focus on the harms of drug use, but in talking with youth, you discover a need for material that addresses refusal skills or other skill-building activities. In this instance, you don't always have to start from scratch. Start by combining parts of existing materials to make a new piece. Combine the best components you can find, such as graphics from one source to accompany text from another. Adapt language and other central elements such as pictures, setting, and activities. When the National Prevention Network (NPN) wanted to increase statewide efforts focusing on what is working in prevention, the CSAP Communications Team worked with them to adapt existing "Prevention Works!" materials (factsheets, logos) to craft a NPN-sponsored effort called Making Prevention Work in Your State.

3. **Add your own tag lines.** Many groups have found that adding their tag line or organization logo to a TV public service announcement or print materials such as a poster or brochure is very effective in getting local attention. However, there have been some concerns about multiple placement of phone numbers and the need for more white space in designs. So remember to ask questions of national designers before you embark on local campaign activities.
4. **Create spin-offs.** Fashion campaign messages and materials for a different audience or issue. For example, Girl Power! is a national public education campaign sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services to help encourage and empower 9- to 14-year-old girls make the most of their lives. Use Girl Power! messages and concepts to develop a campaign focusing on the unique qualities and potential of boys. Or if alcohol is more of a problem than marijuana, you might focus the concept of Reality Check on educating parents about

the degree of alcohol use by children and youth in the community.

5. **Create high visibility in the community.** Print the campaign logo on grocery bags, church bulletins or announcements, community association newsletters. For example, people in suburban Northglenn, Colorado, formed a committee of middle and senior high school girls to begin planning a district-wide event around the Girl Power! messages for girls in grades 7 through 12. They ordered campaign materials (posters, buttons, diaries, brochures) and developed their own Girl Power! bookmarks, using themes from the campaign's print ads.
6. **Focus on activities that are steps toward actual changes in behavior.** If the national campaign, like most, is designed to raise awareness, consider adapting materials to usher people through the awareness-raising stage and on to the next desired behavior. For example, the message in the Your Time, Their Future campaign (see box) encourages people to get involved in activities with youth. You might support that national message by developing a directory of local resources such as clubs and recreation centers that provide opportunities and reinforcement for such behaviors.
7. **Network with others in communities who have similar interest in helping the intended audience.** In doing so, think about the whole person. Recognize that people live not in isolation but in live environments and sometimes those environments, effect the way they behave. If your goal is the prevention of substance abuse problems, find others who can help address antecedent behaviors and motivations. For example, in localizing CSAP's Your Time, Their Future campaign, Kansas City determined that a free volunteer help line was being created without support to promote their 800 number. The common goal created a perfect partnership.



8. **Be spontaneous and take advantage of special opportunities present in the community.** If you learn that a group of parents is gathering for an event, use that event as an opportunity to announce the local campaign. Or if youth are looking for school projects, offer suggestions that can support or bring the youth perspective to local campaign efforts.
9. **Build activities around people in the community and make a special effort to include all segments of the community.** Implement activities primarily through existing organizations such as coalitions, health centers, community-based organizations, and voluntary organizations. Then hold activities in a variety of community settings such as recreation facilities, food service providers, work sites, schools, and churches. For example, the Mercer Council on Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Campaign (Trenton, NJ) participated in the Girl Power! campaign's first phase by providing messages and materials through five student assistance programs in 11 schools and 30 congregational assistance programs in area churches.
10. **Involve authentic voices.** People tend to want to hear from folks like themselves who are experiencing the problem as they are. Get testimonials from parents and youth. Ask youth to talk about programs and role models/mentors who are helping them stay drug free. Have youth talk about close encounters with marijuana and their problem-solving and refusal techniques. Be careful about "extreme" stories regarding marijuana use and addiction and death. The research is inconclusive, and just one case in which the outcome is different may change the audience's reaction to your message.
11. **Link with related problems/issues.** Some issues may have already garnered public support and interest. For example, if the community is already concerned with the number of youth who are incarcerated, make a case for exploring the role that marijuana use may have played in incidents. If the community is concerned about the reduction in recreation facilities, send messages that discuss the potential for youth involvement in unproductive activities, such as alcohol, in the absence of more structured alternatives. If the community is worried about school failure and dropout rates, explore the role that youth use of marijuana and other drugs may play.
12. **Get your message out!**
  - Piggyback on both positive and negative national publicity.
  - Write letters to the editor about the dangers and the complexity of the problem.
  - Volunteer as a guest on local talk shows or public access television programs and point out the glamorization of marijuana use in youth-oriented magazines and movies. Raise the issue of Internet glamorization and pro-use marijuana messages on the Internet.
  - Work with schools. Assist in developing materials for youth in order to help shift the norm of social acceptance of marijuana use, and help youth understand how marijuana use runs counter to school policies.
  - Call reporters and encourage them to report on the positive things that youth are doing in your community.
13. **Seek policy changes.** Remember that the national campaign can create awareness of an issue and raise new agendas for the public to consider. At the local level, you have an opportunity to change environments. For example, with marijuana you might push to limit the sale of rolling paper in convenience stores or gas stations.
14. **Expect to succeed.** Sustain your effort over time. If you succeed, you will increase demand for services and raise

awareness about the issue. Therefore, your audience will be seeking additional information. Can you afford an 800 number? Are you linked with those nationally and locally who could fill the void? Who can you count on to get the resources to your clients/audience?

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## Finding help

As noted, most national campaigns provide some form of technical assistance or help in localizing campaign materials and concepts.

***For additional help or when no other help is available, contact:***

CSAP Communications Team  
7200 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 500  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
301-941-8500 (phone)  
301 941-8512 (fax)  
cct@urc-chs.com

***For sample campaign materials or to get ideas about others' efforts, contact:***

Center for Substance Abuse Treatment  
(301) 443-5052  
<[www.samhsa.gov/csat](http://www.samhsa.gov/csat)>

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America  
901 N. Pitt Street, Suite 300  
Alexandria VA, 22314  
(703) 706-0560 (phone)  
(703) 706-0565 (fax)  
<[www.cadca.org](http://www.cadca.org)>

Join Together  
441 Stuart Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02116  
617-437-1500 (phone)  
617-437-9394 (fax)  
<[www.jointogether.org](http://www.jointogether.org)>

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)  
P.O. Box 541688  
Dallas, TX 75354-1688  
214-744-6233 or 1-800-GET – MADD (phone)  
<[www.madd.org](http://www.madd.org)>

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug  
Dependence, Inc.  
Public Information Department  
12 West 21 Street  
New York, NY 10010  
212-206-6770 (phone)  
212-645-1690 (fax)  
<[www.ncadd.org](http://www.ncadd.org)>

National Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D)  
Prevention Month Coalition  
c/o National Commission Against Drunk  
Driving  
1900 L Street, NW, Suite 705  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-452-6004 (phone)  
202-223-7012 (fax)  
<[www.3dmonth.org](http://www.3dmonth.org)>

National Family Partnership  
9220 SW Barbur Blvd., No.119284  
Portland, OR 97219  
503-768-9659 or 1-800-705-8997 (phone)  
<[www.nfp.org](http://www.nfp.org)>

National Inhalant Prevention Coalition  
1201 W. Sixth Street, Suite C-200  
Austin, TX 78703  
512-480-8953 or 1-800-269-4237 (phone)  
(512) 477-3932 (fax)  
<[www.inhalants.org](http://www.inhalants.org)>

National Mental Illness Screening Project  
1 Washington, Suite 304  
Wellesly Hills, MA 02481  
781-239-0071 (phone)  
<[www.nmis.org](http://www.nmis.org)>

Office of National Drug Control Policy  
(ONDCP)  
750 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20503  
<[www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov)>



SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol  
and Drug Information (NCADI)  
PO Box 1234  
Rockville, MD 20847

301-468-2600 or 1-800-729-6686 (phone)  
<www.health.org>

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Do your own research to ensure effectiveness.  
**Or for additional reading check out:**

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Samuels, Stephen, E. Project LEAN – Lessons Learned From a National Social Marketing Campaign. *Public Health Reports*. 108.1. (1992) : 45-53.

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This bulletin is one in a series developed through CSAP's communication team. It is designed to assist programs working to prevent and reduce alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use and abuse. We welcome your suggestions regarding information that may be included in future bulletins. For help in learning about your audience, developing messages and materials, and evaluating communication programs, contact CSAP's communication team at 301-941-8500.

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Linda E. Bass, MPH  
Project Officer  
Acting Chief, Prevention Education Branch  
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

Ruth A. Marshall  
Managing Editor